

the annual Christmas tree lighting ceremony on Huntington Drive.

And while he did so much for others, never once did he seek any personal reward. Fortunately, Mr. Salaz's efforts did not go unnoticed. As a result of his extensive community involvement, he won the title of Honorary Mayor of El Sereno from 1998–2002.

I can truly say that Mr. Salaz was a wonderful example of community activism, and he found a true reward in helping others. Though he is no longer with us, his memory will live on through his wife, Julia, their 5 children, 13 grandchildren, and 30 great grandchildren.

RECOGNIZING THE EFFORTS OF
PERSONNEL INVOLVED IN THE
RESCUE OF DA'JOUR McMILLIAN
OF FRISCO CITY, ALABAMA

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 16, 2004

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, the family of Da'Jour McMillian and the residents of the small town of Frisco City, Alabama, have reason to be exceedingly grateful this holiday season. Through the combined efforts of emergency rescue personnel, physicians, and industrial workers from Monroe and Mobile Counties, 22-month-old Da'Jour was saved from a situation that is certainly one of the greatest nightmares that could be experienced by any parent.

On Monday, November 1, 2004, Da'Jour was playing with his brother and sister off Central Street in Frisco City when he fell into an abandoned well measuring 14 feet deep. Almost immediately, the community went to work trying to recover him, an operation that took 13 hours and required the assistance of dozens of personnel. Because of the location of the well in relation to hidden power lines and potential unmarked water lines, the recovery operation was extremely dangerous and required a great deal of careful work and planning.

Through the entire ordeal, Da'Jour demonstrated a calm not usually found in a child of such a young age. In fact, he reassured the rescue workers with waves and smiles and by often telling those at the mouth of the well, "I love you." Of the many reasons this story had a happy ending, none was more important than the positive attitude and playful nature of this little boy.

Mr. Speaker, in the difficult circumstances facing our world today, both here at home and abroad, it is important that Americans should be able to depend on their friends and neighbors in their hour of need. As the rescue of little Da'Jour McMillian clearly demonstrates, there is no obstacle that cannot be overcome without a strong sense of community and cooperation. I ask my colleagues to join with me in saluting not only Da'Jour and his family for their courage, but for the following individuals and organizations who played such an important role in his rescue: Chuck Murph, Rita Smith, Rennie Raines, and J. T. Johnson with the Monroe County Emergency Management Agency; Pastor Freddie Lindsey of the Monroeville Church of the Nazarene; Tom Lindsey of Simmons Ambulance Service; Frisco City Mayor Jim Cave; the Frisco City Volunteer

Fire Department; Chief James Maples and the Frisco City Police Department; Dr. David Stallworth of Monroe County Hospital; Allen Nall of Roto-Rooter; Sam Covert of Alabama Power Company; William Snyder of Monroeville Water Works; Chief Eddie Everette and the Monroeville Fire Department; David Coggins with the Alabama Emergency Management Agency; Chief Mike Dean and the personnel of both the City of Mobile Fire Department and USAR Task Force 1; and Ronnie Wright, Bo Bosarge, and Michael Gates with Smith Industrial Services of Mobile.

Because of their efforts, this little boy and his family will indeed have a very bright holiday season.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS
SUPPORT FOR "VETERANS"
BENEFITS IMPROVEMENT ACT
OF 2004"

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 16, 2004

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Speaker, I rise to request that a letter from Al Mansell, the President of the National Association of Realtors, regarding his organization's strong support for the immediate passage of the "Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2004," be placed in the RECORD.

As Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, and as someone who has spearheaded the effort in Congress to raise the VA's home loan guaranty level so that veterans in high cost areas like New Jersey can purchase houses, I am very pleased to have the support of the National Association of Realtors for this important piece of legislation. In fact, I have enjoyed working closely with the National Association of Realtors to improve the VA's home loan guaranty limit.

Mr. Mansell's letter demonstrates his organization's strong commitment to ensuring that the men and women who have honorably served our nation in the military can obtain affordable housing. It has often been said by historians and economists—and accurately, I believe—that the development of America's modern middle class was largely facilitated by two post World War II programs: The G.I. education bill, and the VA's home loan program. A college education, combined with opportunities for home ownership, gave tens of millions of Americans a real stake in our society, and transformed it in positive ways for generations to come.

I am very grateful for the National Association of Realtors' support and hope the House moves expeditiously to pass a final version of the "Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2004," when it is scheduled for floor consideration tomorrow.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®,
Washington, DC, November 15, 2004.

Hon. CHRISTOPHER SMITH,
Chairman, House Veterans' Affairs Committee,
House of Representatives, Cannon House
Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SMITH: On behalf of the one million members of the National Association of Realtors®, I am writing to urge the immediate passage of S. 2486, the "Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 2004." This legislation passed the Senate under

unanimous consent in October, and similar legislation passed the House in June. S. 2486 includes language to increase the veterans' maximum guaranty from \$60,000 to \$83,425; effectively permitting veterans to purchase homes up to \$333,700. The legislation would also index the loan guarantee limit to 25% of the conforming loan limit. These changes are sorely needed to maintain the VA Home Loan Guarantee program as a vital homeownership tool that provides veterans with a centralized, affordable, and accessible method of purchasing homes in return for their service to our nation.

Under current law, the Department of Veterans Affairs will guarantee loans up to \$60,000 for a total home purchase price up to \$240,000. Because of this limitation the VA loan guarantee is not fully useful in a growing number of areas—especially in high-cost states. In states such as California, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Massachusetts, the median price of housing in certain areas of these states far exceeds this limit. Due to the high price appreciation being experienced in many states, combined with a relatively slow pace of income growth, many veterans residing in high-cost housing markets have found homeownership unattainable. S. 2486 would address this anomaly and make this important entitlement available to many more qualified veterans regardless of where they chose to live.

The National Association of Realtors® thanks you, Chairman Smith, for your leadership in this area. With your help our veterans will receive the gratitude and assistance they well deserve. We strongly support S. 2486, and urge its quick passage.

Sincerely,

AL MANSELL,
2005 President.

HONORING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE NORMANDY
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 16, 2004

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the 150th year of existence of the Normandy United Methodist Church of Normandy, Tennessee. The congregation will celebrate the church's 150th anniversary on Sunday, November 7, 2004, with a special homecoming and luncheon.

Changing its name from the Methodist Episcopal Church South to Normandy United Methodist Church in 1968 is only one way the church has changed in order to positively serve its members and its surrounding community. My parents, Robert and Margaret Gordon, were married at this church in 1947, and the church has fostered ongoing relationships with several others within the community and its congregation since its beginning.

Normandy United Methodist Church has served the community and its congregation for well over a century and a half. Just as the church has renovated and expanded its physical structure, so have they also renovated people's lives by expanding their ministry throughout the neighborhood and around the world.

Normandy is a better place because of the work of Normandy United Methodist Church and its congregation. I am sure the church will continue to make a positive difference in the